

use, organised a rally with a difference. For one thing, it was carried out by members and supporters on bicycles; and its purpose was unusual, too—to demand an increase in tobacco taxes and a reduction in bicycle taxes in the next budget.

After a cycle journey through the capital, Dakha, participants presented the chairman of the National Board of Revenue with a petition, explaining that tobacco causes harm both directly and indirectly to developing countries, adversely affecting public health, the

economy, and the environment. They said that to reduce the use of tobacco, the most effective measure was to raise the tax, which would not only yield more government revenue, but also result in a decrease in medical costs to treat people suffering from the diseases caused by tobacco use.

The tax on cigarettes currently ranges from 35–65%, yet the price of cigarettes has remained essentially unchanged for years, despite significant increases in the prices of essential goods. MANOBK said tax increases tend to cause lower

income workers and students to quit, leaving more money available for basic needs. On the other hand, transport expenditures, say the group, are a major strain on the poor, and the most affordable transport, after walking, is cycling, which is both healthy and pollution-free. However, the tax on bicycles is 69.5%. Cleverly combining the themes to make an unassailable case, the rally participants demanded that tobacco taxes be increased by 100%, and the tax on bicycles greatly reduced in the next budget.

## The Lighter Side .....



© Aislin, The Gazette, Montreal. A number of improvements to the Tobacco Act in the Canadian province of Quebec were introduced on World No Tobacco Day, May 31, 2006. Montreal's English-language daily, The Gazette, ran a large, four-part weekly series in the run up to the legislative changes that saw smoking banned from restaurants and bars. This cartoon ran on the editorial page as the series began while the same edition's front page included a suggestively shaped, crushed cigarette, under the headline 'the big butt-out'.

